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Country Update: Bangladesh

December 2020

Foreword

Dear members of the Bangladesh network,

We hereby present the 2020 country update for Bangladesh. Bangladesh, like the Netherlands and the rest of the world, has been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic has changed how we live, with minimal social contact and movement. To adapt to this new way of living and working, our world is swiftly transitioning to virtual interaction. In addition to the Covid-19 pandemic, Bangladesh has been hit by two major disasters this year – Cyclone Amphan and the monsoon floods. Bangladesh is working on dealing with the direct and indirect impacts of all these disasters - the public health crisis, food and water security, and economic crisis. In this edition, we would like to inform you about the current situation in Bangladesh, highlight some ongoing projects, and upcoming events.

2020 has been a rare and difficult year for everyone. We hope that 2021 is a more prosperous year for all of us - in the Netherlands, Bangladesh and the rest of the world. Happy holidays!

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1. Current situation in Bangladesh

Covid-19

Bangladesh, like the rest of the world, has been impacted by Covid-19. It is one of the most densely populated country in the world and therefore the challenge of controlling the Covid-19 pandemic is greater. The first Covid-19 case was reported on 8 March 2020, followed by a national response on 22 March 2020 with a 10-day shutdown. The measures taken in the country are aligned with the recommendations of the World Health Organisation in order to control the spread of the virus. Measures include wearing face masks and social distancing. In week 48 of the pandemic (22-28 November 2020), an increase in international flights by 3.4% was seen. Screening is mandatory at airports followed by institutional quarantine for individuals with symptoms. As of September 5, public transport is allowed again but passengers are obliged to wear masks and be seated in order to remain distances.

As of 30 November 2020, Bangladesh has 464,932 confirmed cases and 6,644 deaths due to the virus. With these numbers, Bangladesh is 26th on the list of countries with the most number of confirmed cases. The Dhaka division is most affected with 316,728 cases followed by Chattogram (56,541), Khulna (23,853) and Rajshahi (22,608) divisions. From mid-September until mid-/end-October, the number of cases of Covid-19 had fallen. However, the numbers have risen again since then. More than 50% of the people affected by the virus are aged between 21 and 40 years old, where most deaths are faced by people aged 50 years or older. The Covid-19 pandemic challenges the health system of Bangladesh. 56.2% of the ICU beds are currently occupied all over the country.

Cyclone Amphan

Cyclone Amphan made landfall in India on 20 May 2020 and crossed Bangladesh on 20-21 May, during the Covid19 pandemic. The cyclone was a 'super cyclone'. 76 Upazillas were impacted in 19 districts with 8 districts having moderate to severe impact. Satkhira and Khulna were most impacted by the cyclone with wind speed recording 60-90 Km/h and high tidal inundation. Barguna, Patuakhali, Jhenaidah, Chuadanga, Meherpur, Kushtia, Natore, Rajshahi, Naogaon, and Joypurhat were also impacted by the cyclone. The Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) coordinated the preparation for the cyclone along with relevant government and non-government stakeholders. The government prepared cyclone shelters in the coastal region and over 2.4 million people were evacuated before the cyclone hit. The death toll was recorded at 26 people while 2.6 million people were affected and there was damage to infrastructure and facilities. Assistance in the form of cash grants, dry food packages, young child-specific food, house repair items and water purification units were provided to impacted communities. The Government of Bangladesh has coordinated and developed a short and medium-long term response which include targeted humanitarian assistance, recovery, reconstruction, and planning for the future.

2020 Monsoon floods

The monsoon rains in 2020 led to severe floods in Bangladesh. The 30 districts in the Northern, North-Eastern and South-Eastern regions were impacted with 15 districts reporting severe flooding. About 5.4 million people were affected and over 220 deaths were reported. Over 167,000 families were displaced and houses, agriculture land, roads, and flood protection infrastructure were damaged. Continued heavy rains and gusty winds also impacted the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar with 109,312 affected and 14 deaths. The floods along with prolonged inundation and the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the impact on the people, making the situation complex due to the need for social distancing and handwashing while evacuation and



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displacement are taking place. This increased the risk of spread of Covid-19. Access to primary health care was disrupted due to restricted mobility. The destruction of safe drinking water and hygiene infrastructure increased the risk of water-borne diseases and Covid-19. Preparation and emergency response were coordinated by the Government of Bangladesh. Additionally, an early and medium-term response was developed.

Economy and society

Crises within crises with a combination of the Covid-19 pandemic, Cyclone Amphan and the 2020 monsoon floods disrupted social and economic activities in Bangladesh. These events added distress to vulnerable and marginalised groups, negatively impacting their safety and security. Additionally, livelihood and food security, WASH, health, and education were negatively impacted.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the economic growth rate of Bangladesh was 8.2% in the financial year 2019 (FY19). In 2020, due to the pandemic, the economic growth rate is expected to be 5.2% in FY 2020. The impact of Covid-19 on the economy of Bangladesh has been felt in (1) the domestic economic activity, (2) exports and (3) remittances. A decline in domestic activities can be related to the shutdown earlier this year in March. Exports account for a great deal to the economy of Bangladesh, of which more than 80% is related to the ready-made garment industry. A fall in remittances is due to the pandemic that causes travel restrictions and economic slowdowns in host countries. Besides this, a decline in oil prices has led to fewer remittances, since more than 10 million Bangladeshis live in Middle Eastern countries. The forecast of the economic growth rate for FY 2021 is 6.8% which implies an increase of 1.6% compared with the year 2019.

2. Partners for Water: Updates and plans for 2021

Under the Partners for Water (PFW) programme, the Delegated Representative for Water (DR), Mr Martijn van de Groep, began working at the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Bangladesh in 2020 to support the Government of Bangladesh in the implementation of the Bangladesh Delta Plan 100 (BDP2100). The DR-W along with a team of consultants from the Netherlands (financed by PFW) is supporting the organisation of the 1st International Conference on the Bangladesh Delta Plan. The General Economics Division (GED) of the Bangladesh Government will organise and finance the event along with the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, JICA and the PV EU. During this event, the Valuing Water concept will be showcased as a follow-up of a scoping study conducted by the Bangladesh High-Level Committee for Valuing Water. Several other projects are ongoing under the PFW programme in the period 2020-21 including the development of a Netherlands-Bangladesh information portal and an advisory team for Bangladesh from Rijkswaterstaat. However, some other activities are on hold or have been moved to 2021 such as like the trade mission to Bangladesh and a study tour by delegates from Bangladesh to the Netherlands.

3. Joint Cooperation Programme Bangladesh-The Netherlands (JCP)

The Netherlands and Bangladesh have a long-standing relationship in the field of water management, both in development projects and knowledge programmes. Close cooperation exists at the institutional level between government, semi-government, and academic organizations. The Joint Cooperation Programme Bangladesh – the Netherlands (JCP), financed and supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (EKN), is a



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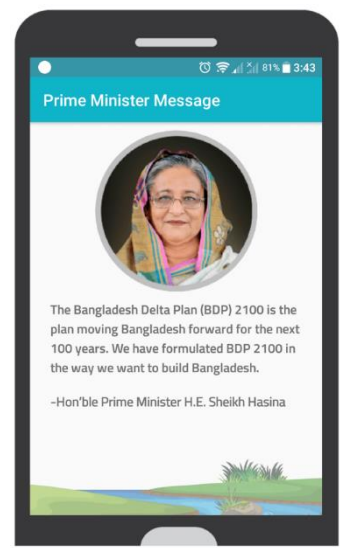
four-year programme, started in December 2019, in which the Institute of Water Modelling (IWM), the Center for Environmental and Geographic Information Services (CEGIS), Wageningen University & Research (WUR) and Deltares work together with the following objective: Long term knowledge sharing and capacity building, between Bangladesh and the Dutch knowledge institutes, in support of improved Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), flood and drought management, urban water management and adaptive delta planning.



Figure 1. Participants from the JCP Annual Meeting in February 2020

The goal of JCP is to increase the knowledge base of all the institutes involved and to strengthen the capacity of institutes in Bangladesh to plan, develop and manage their (marine and fresh) water resources systems. The capacities targeted under JCP include water system knowledge, data management, decision-support and impact forecasting, but also the capacity for cooperation, institutional development and governance within Bangladesh and Dutch water knowledge institutions. Achieving these goals will support the contribution that the Dutch water sector can make to Bangladesh and the implementation of the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 (BDP). JCP generates direct benefits in on-going programmes and with a view to secure long-term funding for knowledge development from a range of funding agencies.

The Bangladesh institutes and their Dutch partners have set the agenda for JCP, building on experience and policy principles outlined in the BDP2100 knowledge agenda, the WMKIP knowledge agenda, needs identified in other key projects and programmes, and the 7th Five Year Plan. Broad stakeholder consultation took place during the inception workshop in February 2019 and through direct contact with partner organizations. Stakeholders from government and non-government organizations provided feedback to the JCP partners on the 6 knowledge projects:





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- **Bangladesh Metamodel**, with the main objective to support adaptive delta planning (IWRM and ICZM) by key stakeholders such as the General Economics Division, Ministry of Water Resources and others in investment planning and integrated assessment.
- **Information for Impact** aimed at the development of application-based information services in support of the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100.
- **Polders of the Future**, focusing on the integral issues within the polders, such as the design and operation of sluices and regulator gates.
- **Go with the Flow**, where the objective is to provide insights into the offtake of the Old Brahmaputra River and provide sustainable offtake management options.
- **Clean and Safe Water for Dhaka City**, aiming to improve monitoring, data analysis and interpretation of water quality management issues in the surrounding rivers of Dhaka.
- **Make it Real**, aimed at studying the integration between water availability and food production, considering external developments such as climate change and urbanization.

Figure 2. Information for Impact Application. Please see the Google Play Store for download

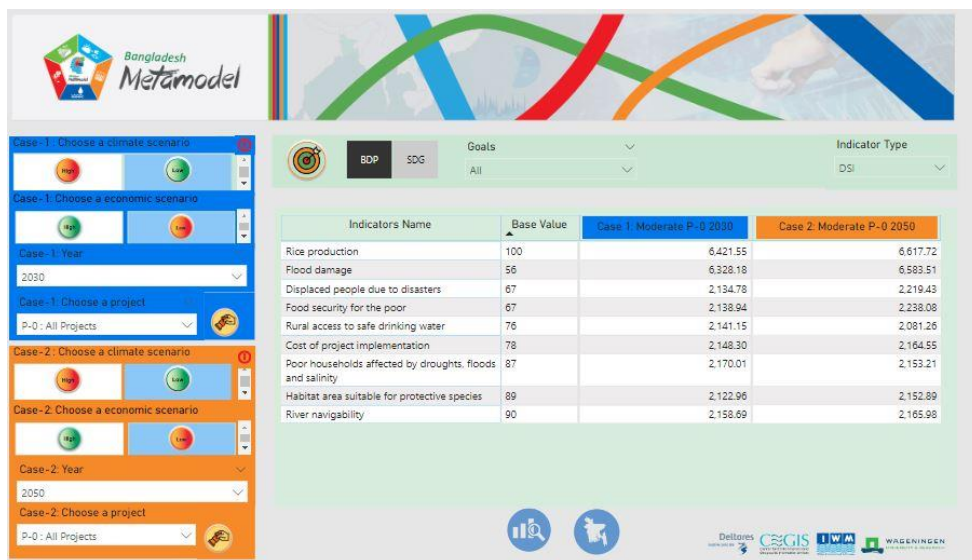


Figure 3. Impact Explorer of the Bangladesh Metamodel at a glance

For more information, please visit the JCP website (<http://www.icpbd.nl/>), take a look at the [Facebook Page](#), or contact [William Oliemans](#) or [Nishchal Sardjoe](#) of Deltares.

4. Dutch Design Awards: Water as Leverage

The Dutch Design Awards are the largest in Northern Europe. The Rijksoverheid commissioned Water as Leverage for Resilient Cities Asia (WaL) programme has won the 2020 Dutch Design Awards in the category 'Best Commissioning'. WaL is a programme that commissioned challenges to explore multi-disciplinary, integrated, design-driven and innovative approaches to address the issues we face in rapidly growing cities today. It uses water as the core of the programme, with its interconnective characteristics and ability to leverage risks into opportunities. The programme aims to address the challenges society faces in an inclusive and integrated manner, inducing sustainable economic development, social growth, and biodiversity rehabilitation. The programme commissioned two teams in three different Asia cities – Khulna (Bangladesh),



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Chennai (India), and Semarang (Indonesia). Vulnerable communities are actively involved in the process to work with the teams to improve their environment.

The WaL programme showed that changing the way of commissioning can make a difference, as shown by the examples in Chennai, Semarang and Khulna. The Government of the Netherlands ignited this process, but Commissioning can only be the best if all stakeholders thrive. Everybody needs to be involved - banks, communities, governments, designers – all stakeholders. Such a method enables key stakeholders on all levels to become ‘guardians of the body of thought’, and that is critical for the financiers.

Two teams have been working on challenges in Khulna using the WaL approach. A consortium led by Euroconsult Mott MacDonald B.V. along with Khulna University of Engineering & Technology and Urban and Regional Planning (KUET-URP) make up the team ‘Creating inclusive and natural water synergies in Khulna urban region’. This project aims to address the waterlogging and flooding in the city of Khulna through the systematic transformation of four interlinked systems, namely, drainage, solid waste, sewerage and drinking water. It will set up a decentralised sewerage system, promote collection and reuse of solid waste, rehabilitate and extend the drainage system, create additional reservoirs, safeguard ponds, and rehabilitate canals and drains. Strong community involvement will be a part of the project. This project will make Khulna a more liveable and attractive city due to the reduced health risks and economic losses caused by floods and waterlogging. Additionally, the project improves economic opportunities and is in line with the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100.

A second consortium, ‘Khulna as a Water Inclusive City’, is led by CDR International with Defacto Architecture & Urbanism, DevConsultant, Nelen en Schuurmans, Royal HaskoningDHV, Khulna University and Wageningen University and Research. The store, retain and re-use approach to managing water is used in this project to restore the water balance in Khulna. Project components include multi-purpose green parks, blue-green zones for water storage and re-use for irrigation, and creation of additional storage in existing ponds. Using these components, three sub-projects have been developed - 100 ponds will be preserved and the storage capacity increased; the Moyur river will be made into a reservoir by preventing encroachment, and water storage areas will be developed in gardens, public spaces, roads, parking garages, amongst other spaces.

As a result of continued efforts of the Water as Leverage programme in Khulna, in close corporation with Khulna City Corporation, the existing integrated, inclusive and innovative pre-feasibility project proposals of WaL Khulna are currently being developed into a Develop2Build (D2B)¹ feasibility study. The projects will align and integrate with the ongoing feasibility studies on climate change-adapted urban development (funded by KfW, German Development Bank) and waste management (funded by Asian Development Bank, ADB) in Khulna where possible. Additionally, Khulna University of Engineering and Technology (KUET) will assist, at the request of Khulna City Corporation, in a capacity-building project for these activities. WaL Khulna, along with the WaL liaison in Dhaka, Mr Sohel Rana, and the Netherlands Delegated Representative, Mr Martijn van de Groep, is up to speed on working towards presenting tangible results at the Global Adaptation Summit in January 2021.

For more information on the Water as Leverage programme, the projects under it, and the executive summaries of the teams, you can visit the WaL page on the World Water Atlas website: <https://wwa-datocms-staging.netlify.app/curated/water-as-leverage/>. Additionally, more information on the Dutch Design Awards 2020 for the WaL programme can be found here: <https://ddw.nl/en/programme/4493/water-as-leverage-for-resilient-cities-asia>



¹Develop2Build (D2B): The Rijksoverheid Develop2Build Programme has a unique capacity to fund and facilitate the process of creating a feasibility study of public infrastructure, adhering to the demands of international financial institutions.

5. SDG Partnerschapsfaciliteit (SDGP) projects

Two new projects under the SDG Partnerschapsfaciliteit (SDGP) have been established in Bangladesh.

Coastal opportunities and agricultural solutions to tackle salinity in Bangladesh (COASTS)

During the next 4 years, Coastal opportunities and agricultural solutions to tackle salinity in Bangladesh (COASTS) will focus on strategies to support sustainable incomes in agriculture and food systems. The project aims to improve the use of farmland affected by salinity levels and improve its productive use. Having more locally produced salt-tolerant seed varieties helps to increase saline-resistant farming. Farmers will also receive agricultural training which will help improve agricultural activity and incomes in Southern Bangladesh. The organisations involved in this project are Bangladesh Agriculture University (BAU), ICCO, Lal Teer, and Soil Resource Development Institute (SRDI).

Smart Farming, Healthy Food in Bangladesh: Developing sustainable and climate-resilient smallholder vegetable production and supply systems

This 5-year project aims to develop sustainable and climate-resilient cropping systems for smallholders. It will help vegetable farmers to prepare for climate risks which will assist in the improvement of their farm output. The project also improves access to input and output markets and other agricultural services. The project partners involved are AgroTec Distribution Limited, East-West International B.V., Department of Agricultural Extension, Solidaridad Network Asia Limited, and Stichting Solidaridad Nederland.

You can find more information on the SDG Partnerschapsfaciliteit (SDGP) here (in Dutch):

<https://www.rvo.nl/subsidie-en-financieringswijzer/sdg-partnerschapsfaciliteit-sdgp>. You can also explore the other ongoing projects executed by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) here:

<https://projects.rvo.nl/section/development-cooperation/>

6. Blue Economy

In the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100, marine, coastal and port development have been identified as one of the promising key areas in general. More specifically, a preliminary study implemented in 2018 through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh into the biodiversity of the Bay of Bengal concluded that there is a strong potential for exploiting marine genetic resources and developing blue biotechnology for applications such as pharmaceuticals, nutraceuticals, animal feed, cosmetics, and food additives. The different sectors that use marine genetic resources all have specific R&D processes and timelines. To follow-up, an MoU has been signed



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between the Government of Bangladesh and the Government of the Netherlands in which it has been agreed that the Netherlands will fund a scoping study to:

- compose a comprehensive database of marine genetic resources for Bangladesh;
- select promising marine genetic resources for product development; and
- map the value chain network for marine genetic resources.

Given the Netherlands' distinctive expertise on marine biodiversity, specific attention will be paid to identifying the 'low hanging fruits' for product development by Dutch and Bangladeshi private sector businesses due to the short R&D cycle, low technology requirements for production and sizeable regional markets. The scoping study fits well within the overall water resources management approach of Bangladesh as embodied in the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 and will be implemented in 2021 as soon as Covid-19-related travel restrictions are removed.

Joep Janssen, a publicist and delta expert, interviewed experts to better understand how the Blue Economy is being embraced in Bangladesh. This article, along with the other articles written by Joep Janssen in this series on Bangladesh, were funded by the Partners voor Water programme. You can read more about his findings here: <https://www.dutchwatersector.com/news/the-making-of-a-blue-revolution-in-bangladesh>

7. Events calendar and activities for 2021

Activities

In 2021, four market scans will be conducted in order to better understand the water and agricultural sectors in Bangladesh. These scans will focus on the dairy, horticulture and aquaculture sectors as well as an update of the water sector scan conducted in 2018.

Events

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to a number of events being postponed or moved to a digital format. Please find below some of the events that will take place in 2021.

1st International Conference on the Bangladesh Delta Plan will be organised in Q2 2021 in Bangladesh.

A study tour and a trade mission will also be organised in 2021 under the PFW framework. However, the dates are yet to be confirmed.

8th International Conference in Water and Flood Management will be on 29-31 March 2021



The next SIWW will be on 20-24 June 2021





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The Climate Adaptation Summit of the Global Commission on Adaptation has been re-scheduled to take place digitally on 25 January 2021



The UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) set to take place in Glasgow has been re-scheduled to 1-12 November 2021



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